

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 001391

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR G/TIP: GAYATRI PATEL; NEA/IPA: JOSHUA DAVIS;
NEA/RA: JOHN MENARD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [ELAB](#) [IS](#) [KCRM](#) [HUMANITARIAN](#) [AID](#) [ISRAELI](#) [SOCIETY](#) [GOI](#) [INTERNAL](#)
SUBJECT: RECENT GOI PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Director General Aharon Abramovitch told the Ambassador April 3 that the GOI seeks to abolish all forms of trafficking in persons. De facto Anti-Trafficking Coordinator Rahel Gershuni reported that the government's inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee plans to educate police officers about the importance of pursuing more criminal indictments instead of administrative penalties when confronting employers that abuse their foreign workers. The committee has recommended creation of a coordinator position within the Israeli National Police (INP) to handle cases of employers that abuse their workers. The Ambassador stressed to DG Abramovitch the importance of creating an official anti-TIP coordinator position, and Abramovitch replied that technical difficulties that have caused delays should be resolved within "a few weeks." The Ambassador replied affirmatively to a request from Abramovitch for USG support for a one-day, anti-TIP seminar that Gershuni has planned for July. After the meeting, the Ambassador informed Gershuni that the Department has selected her as a "hero" in the fight against trafficking. END SUMMARY.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL VOICES GOI COMMITMENT TO FIGHT TRAFFICKING

12. (SBU) Ministry of Justice Director General Aharon Abramovitch told the Ambassador that the GOI seeks to abolish all forms of trafficking in persons. He said that trafficking is a relatively new phenomenon in Israel, but he emphasized that "we as a country will not accept trafficking as a phenomenon that can continue."

PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST LABOR TRAFFICKING

13. (SBU) Gershuni said that the GOI's inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee has met four times already this year specifically to address the issue of labor trafficking. She reported that the committee has decided to focus its efforts in the coming months particularly on educating police officers about the importance of pursuing more criminal indictments instead of administrative penalties when confronting employers that abuse their foreign workers. The committee has also recommended creation of a coordinator position within the Israeli National Police (INP) to handle cases of employers that abuse their workers. Gershuni added that the Supreme Court ruling of March 30 that prohibits the current practice of "binding" foreign workers to one employer will significantly decrease the power of potentially abusive employers.

14. (SBU) Gershuni said that she is aware of approximately 15 to 20 cases of labor trafficking in 2005, and noted that while she may be unaware of other cases, she firmly believes that fewer than 100 instances of labor trafficking occurred in Israel during the past year. She explained that she perceives a difference between conditions that violate workers' rights and conditions that amount to labor trafficking. She claimed that trafficking in persons for the purposes of labor occurs rarely in Israel, while abuse of foreign workers unfortunately occurs more often. The Ambassador noted that, by definition, traffickers deprive a "trafficked" person of the agency or power to change basic aspects of his personal circumstances; it seems possible, he said, that if the GOI claims that about 70,000 foreign workers resided in Israel during 2005, then more than 100 were trafficked.

PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING

15. (SBU) Gershuni reported that the MOJ will issue April 10 to the INP and the Immigration Administration (IA) a new policy directive intended to help identify trafficking victims in Israel's detention centers. According to the new policy, Gershuni explained, police officers and IA officials

must now fill out a "checklist" every time they detain a foreigner in Israel. The checklist, Gershuni said, contains questions about the detainee's country of origin and point of entry, among many other details. Judges at the detention center must then review the checklist to see whether the detainee matches a profile of trafficking victims. If so, Gershuni said, then the judge must immediately contact the Legal Aid office in the MOJ. Gershuni called poloff April 6 to report that Justice Minister Tzipi Livni just approved new guidelines to provide free legal representation, through the Legal Aid office, to any persons in Israel's detention centers who are suspected victims of trafficking. (Note: The government previously provided this free legal aid only to trafficking victims residing in the shelter for trafficked women. End note.)

16. (SBU) Gershuni reported that these efforts also have the full and enthusiastic support of Boaz Okon, president of the Israeli Courts Administration. She said that she hopes these changes "will create a synergy between immigration officials, police, and judges so that many more trafficking victims can be identified." Since the new policies may lead to the identification of a greater number of sex trafficking victims in the detention centers, Gershuni explained, a team comprising the inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee, the Ministry of Public Welfare, NGOs, and the shelter staff has begun seeking additional housing for victims of sex trafficking, since the shelter only has space for 50 people. According to Gershuni, they are currently examining the possibility of secure "half-way houses" similar to those used by the GOI to accommodate victims of domestic violence.

17. (SBU) Abramovitch added that the GOI may begin paying to send back to their countries of origin victims who request to recover at home, and then pay again to fly the victims back to Israel in order to testify against their traffickers. In the past, Gershuni noted, the GOI generally required the victims to stay in Israel pending the trial of their traffickers. Gershuni also said that she will be meeting April 11 with the director general of the Population Administration, Yissachar Katsir, who leads the process of devising and implementing visa policy for trafficking victims.

GOI ANTI-TIP COORDINATOR POSITION

18. (SBU) The Ambassador stressed to DG Abramovitch the importance of creating an official coordinator position in order to improve collaboration within the government and to establish a single entry-point for ideas and complaints from outside the government. The Ambassador then asked what has delayed the official appointment of a coordinator, since the government budgeted for the position in May 2005. Abramovitch first cited "technical difficulties," but then said that these should be resolved within "a few weeks." Abramovitch noted that the government has also budgeted for a part-time administrative assistant for Gershuni, as well as two law students to provide research and support. (Note: The director general of the MOJ heads the inter-ministerial committee of directors general that oversees GOI anti-trafficking efforts. NGOs and de facto coordinator Gershuni have told poloff that Abramovitch has the power to ensure the creation of the official coordinator position, or to delay its creation. End note.)

19. (SBU) Gershuni added that she believes that the government should create two coordinator positions -- one to fight sex trafficking, and one to prevent labor trafficking. She reported that the foreign workers ombudsman, Iris Mayan, has already begun to move beyond her official duties to play the role of unofficial coordinator of the GOI fight against employers who abuse their foreign workers. Abramovitch noted that Gershuni also began her coordinating work by quietly acting first, and then seeking permission later. The Ambassador asked whether the soon-to-be-established anti-trafficking coordinator position might lead, in the future, to creation of an anti-trafficking agency or authority. Abramovitch replied that he hoped that trafficking would be abolished before the GOI needed such an institution. He added that situating the anti-trafficking coordinator in the MOJ has the significant advantage of proximity to the Attorney General.

GOI ANTI-TIP SEMINAR

110. (SBU) Abramovitch asked for USG support for the one-day, anti-TIP seminar that Gershuni has planned for July. Gershuni told poloff in several previous meetings that she views this seminar as a major opportunity both to create pressure on the government to appoint an official coordinator, and to announce publicly the identity and role of this coordinator. She said that she plans to invite to

the seminar officials from approximately 18 government ministries as well as leading NGOs and selected journalists. (Note: Gershuni herself will likely be appointed to serve as the GOI's first official coordinator. End note.) The Ambassador noted that this seminar will be a good opportunity for the newly empowered -- and official -- anti-TIP coordinator to increase momentum in the fight against trafficking. Abramovitch requested that the USG provide official support to the seminar by recruiting a high-profile speaker from Washington, and that we provide a minimal financial contribution. He noted that the speaker is more important to the GOI than the grant. The Ambassador communicated USG support for this seminar and said we will try our best to provide both a speaker and a small grant.

ANTI-TIP "HERO" AWARD

11. (SBU) The Ambassador informed Gershuni and Abramovitch that the State Department has selected Gershuni as a "hero" in the fight against trafficking. Gershuni said that she felt honored, but that NGOs deserve this recognition. Poloff explained that while the NGOs do excellent and vital work, Gershuni has demonstrated that committed individuals can work effectively from within government to fight against trafficking. She expressed her thanks and accepted the terms of the award.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website.

JONES